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BENNETT BAILS ON BIG BLUE {page 21}

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'Cannibal Cop' jury serves guilty verdict

After 16 hours of deliberation, a unanimous jury found Gilberto Valles guilty of all charges ▶ He could face life in prison for his actions {page 02}

MILES DIXON/METRO

Vets. Hard Times

▶ Kevin Kirwan, one of more than 200,000 local vets, returned to the states only to find that his military training doesn't count in NYC. {page 02}

music

Jim James digs for gold in Austin

My Morning Jacket singer talks going solo {pages 14-15}

style

Marc Jacobs on Diet Coke and dresses

Designer opens up in rare interview {pages 16-17}

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An electrician in Iraq, but not Queens

Veterans struggle to get jobs in NY • Military certification doesn't always clear way to same job when back home • Plumbers, electricians, safety inspectors all must undergo new training • Council bill aims to streamline process

MILES DIXON/METRO

"Hiring veterans isn't about giving a handout. They're qualified, hard-working and eager to do their part to move this country forward."
IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA FOUNDER PAUL RIECKHOFF

▶ Kevin Kirwan returned to the states only to find that his military certification doesn't count in New York City.

For the second time in two years, Kevin Kirwan, a logistics specialist for the Navy for 14 years in places like North Africa, can't find a job.

Kirwan, 37, is one of an estimated 210,000 veterans in the city, many struggling to find employment after years of service.

The City Council met Monday to discuss ways to help them get hired.

According to the Council, the unemployment rate for recent veterans rose from 9.1 percent to 11.7 percent from 2012 to 2013. Meanwhile, the general unemployment rate fell from 8.3 percent to 7.9, percent.

"People who go out to fight for us, that protect our country, deserve the best, and we need to continue to give them the tools that are going to make them viable when they return," Brooklyn Councilwoman Sara Gonzalez said.

To apply for a license, many city jobs require experience in the city or U.S., meaning military experience does not apply.

Metro profiled Kirwan in a 2011 story. After the article, his experience with logistics and administration landed him a job at Chase, but his project ended in January.

After three months of job fairs, visits to veterans' help centers and countless applications — and with a 13-month-old son — he is worried about paying the bills.

"It's frustrating," he told Metro.

Alison Bowen
alison.bowen@metro.us

Battlefield to civilian

Many vets struggle to translate battlefield experience for civilian jobs. And even if they were trained for jobs that exist in civilian life, they return only to find they are qualified to fix plumbing in Iraq, but not Queens.

In the news

Disabled girl pushed out bus

A 13-year-old girl has a broken collarbone after being shoved out of a moving school bus by another student, according to the Daily News.

Amore-Virginia Peterson was reportedly shoved "into the path of oncoming traffic" in Brooklyn. The boy who pushed her tumbled out after her.

Education officials said that the attacker is facing disciplinary action. DANIELLE TCHOLAKIAN

In the news

City Council pushes for speed cameras

City Council members announced their support for legislation that would authorize a pilot program for speed cameras in New York City. The legislation would authorize the testing of a maximum of 40 speed cameras at high-risk locations. Speaker Christine Quinn said that speeding is the No. 1 cause of fatal crashes in the city; one in four traffic deaths is apparently caused by speeding. METRO/DT

Gilberto Valle, 'Cannibal Cop,' found guilty on all charges

A former New York City police officer plotted to kidnap, kill and cook women, a jury decided Tuesday.

After 16 hours of deliberation, a jury reached the verdict that Gilberto Valle, 28, was guilty on all charges.

Prosecutors charged that Valle plotted to kidnap women, keeping files on more than 100, and conspired to eventually kill and cook them.

His defense lawyer portrayed his actions as harmless sexual fantasies, telling jurors he should not be convicted for his thoughts.

Evidence included online communications in which prosecutors said he plotted to cook women, judging whether his oven could fit one if he folded her legs. He also agreed to a payment of $5,000 to deliver a woman bound and alive, prosecutors said.

His wife, who was among his planned victims, prosecutors said, testified against him at trial. He cried during her testimony.

Valle, a Forest Hills resident who had patrolled in Harlem, faces life in prison.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ He could face up to life in prison when sentenced.

"If he had simply said twisted things with other peculiar nerds online, it never would have been prosecuted, but once he opened the database, it was a game changer."
WEINSTOCK

Former Brooklyn prosecutor and attorney Michael Weinstock said the "game changer" in the case was Valle illegally using a crime database to find information on potential victims, which was itself a crime.

"He's not just going onto a website with weirdos and talking about killing his wife," Weinstock said. "That would be weird, and that would be disturbing, but that alone would not have gotten the guy convicted."

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said that the case showed the Web cannot be used for planning crimes.

"Today, a unanimous jury found that Gilberto Valle's detailed and specific plans to abduct women for the purpose of committing grotesque crimes were very real and that he was guilty as charged," Bharara said. "The Internet is a forum for the free exchange of ideas, but it does not confer immunity for plotting crimes and taking steps to carry out those crimes." METRO/AB

FACEBOOK

▶ Valle

Allegations

- Planned to abduct and cook 100 women
- Negotiated price of $5,000 to deliver a woman bound, gagged and alive
- Used the National Crime Information Center to find potential victims
- Kept files including a document entitled "Abducting and Cooking [Victim-1] a Blueprint," with name, birthday, height, weight and bra size

Excerpts from the alleged planning

"[My oven] is big enough to fit one of these girls if I folded their legs."

"I was thinking of tying her body onto some kind of apparatus ... cook her over a low heat, keep her alive as long as possible."

"I love that she is asleep right now not having the slightest clue of what we have planned. Her days are numbered."

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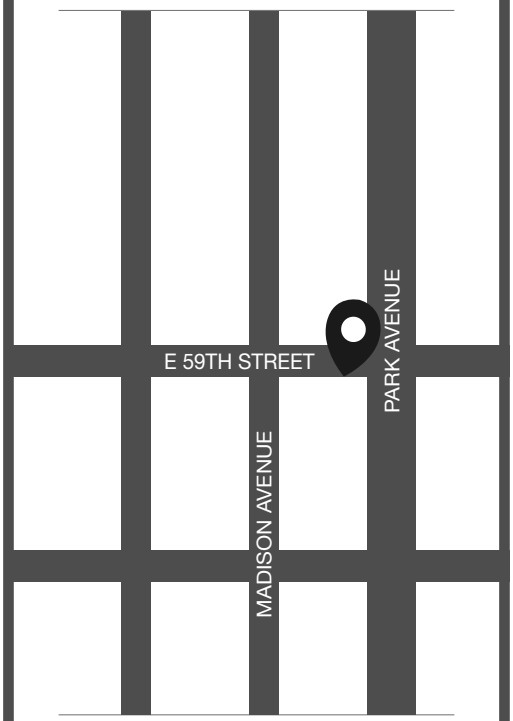

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Low-performing schools to close

WILLIAM ALATRISTE

▶ Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott said the DOE has to do something about poorly performing schools.

The Panel for Educational Policy voted on Monday night to approve the closing of 22 city schools, The New York Times reports.

Twenty schools in the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan will be phased out over the next few years. Two schools–M.S. 45 in Manhattan and Freedom Academy High School in Brooklyn–will be shut down this June, instead of being phased out.

The schools were selected for closure based on low-performance ratings.

"The goal is to have more quality choices for our students and we cannot just sit on our hands and allow poor performing schools to just exist for the emotional sake," Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott told reporters on Monday.

Devon Puglia at the Department of Education told Metro that the department's policy is working.

22
The Panel for Educational Policy voted on Monday night to approve the closing of 22 city schools, The New York Times reports.

"Across the city, new schools are delivering resounding results, graduating students at roughly 20 points high than the schools they replaced," Puglia said. "Families deserve great schools — and we're delivering."

According to Puglia, in 2006, all of the high schools that were phased out had a graduation rate of 28 percent. In 2011, all new high schools had a graduation rate of 70 percent, he said.

Laura Shin
letters@metro.us

In the news

Gunfire erupts in 7-Eleven

NYPD

▶ The suspects

Two men fired shots at a 22-year-old victim and attempted to rob him inside of a 7-Eleven in the Bronx on Monday, March 13.

The armed suspects entered the convenience store located at 1754 University Avenue in Morris Heights at 7 a.m. and demanded money from the victim and then fired their weapons four times.

The suspects may have been chasing the victim, the New York Post reported. An employee of the store herded customers to a back room, saving them from the gunfire, sources told the Post.

No injuries were reported and the suspects fled without any money or property. The investigation is ongoing.

The suspects are described as being Hispanic and in their 20s. One was wearing gray sweatpants and a black jacket. The other has a beard and a ponytail and was wearing a black jacket and blue jeans.

Anyone with information should call Crime Stoppers at (800) 577-TIPS.

METRO/LS

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News in brief

Four robberies in one day

Police are searching for a man who tried to rob four businesses in one day. In each incident, the suspect passed a note and demanded cash. He first targeted a Chase Bank on Seventh Avenue at 10 a.m. on March 8. He fled without cash. The suspect then robbed a FedEx store on 35th Street and an IHOP where he fled with an unknown amount of cash. At 1:50 p.m., he entered a Modell's on Broadway where he fled without receiving money. No injuries were reported. Anyone that has information should call Crime Stoppers at (800) 577-TIPS. METRO/LS

KEVIN C DOWNS

▶ Public Advocate Bill de Blasio and Councilmember Jumaane Williams were two of the elected officials that showed up for the vigil.

▶ A neighborhood memorial was set up to honor the memory of Gray.

Young people take a minute to remember their fallen friend, Kimani Gray.

▶ Community members in East Flatbush hold a vigil.

Councilman asks Kelly to visit riot community

Councilman Jumaane Williams, who represents the East Flatbush neighborhood where last night's riot took place, released a statement yesterday condemning the "violence caused to property or to person," but also said that the action "was not about the details of one shooting."

He urged Mayor Michael Bloomberg and NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly to join him on a walk around his district today "to see the situation firsthand and address constituents who demand real reform."

According to Deputy Commissioner Paul Browne, "Commissioner Kelly was there last night."

Browne said that Kelly meets regularly with a group called the NYPD Brooklyn Clergy Coalition, "a group of black ministers who came to the Commissioner to volunteer their assistance in combating black-on-black violence."

Browne said that members of the group were "instrumental in calming things down last night."

Danielle Tcholakian
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Vigil to riot

A vigil for a 16-year-old who was shot and killed by police officers this weekend ended in a violent riot in East Flatbush on Monday, with trashed stores and some residents being assaulted. About 200 people had gathered to mourn Kimani Gray, who was shot Saturday night after he supposedly pointed a gun at two police officers. At 9 p.m., a group left the ceremony and began ransacking stores, according to the New York Post. Gray's family said the teen did not own a gun and do not believe the cops' story.

LAURA SHIN

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In the news

GETTY IMAGES

Divided Senate panel votes for gun background checks

WASHINGTON. A divided Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday endorsed President Barack Obama's call to require criminal background checks for all gun buyers, yet it remained uncertain if the measure would become law.

On a party-line vote of 10-8, the Democratic-led panel sent the measure to the full Senate, where it faces a possible procedural roadblock that could kill it.

Federally registered firearm dealers are now required to run background checks on buyers. But about 40 percent of sales are made by private dealers who do not have such an obligation.

Obama proposed background checks for all gun buyers after the school massacre in Newtown, Conn., last December, which left 20 children and six adults dead. **REUTERS**

Spokesman says Obama budget likely out during week of April 8

WASHINGTON. President Barack Obama is likely to issue his budget proposal the week of April 8, White House spokesman Jay Carney said yesterday.

The president usually releases a budget proposal outlining how he would pay for his policy priorities in early February. The release of the budget has been held back this year by negotiations with Congress over tax rates and spending cuts, the White House has said. **REUTERS**

Republicans unveil plan to shrink deficit

A 10-year, $4.6 trillion balanced budget proposal unveiled by Republicans yesterday could either be shelved within weeks or help jump-start negotiations with President Barack Obama toward a major deficit-reduction deal.

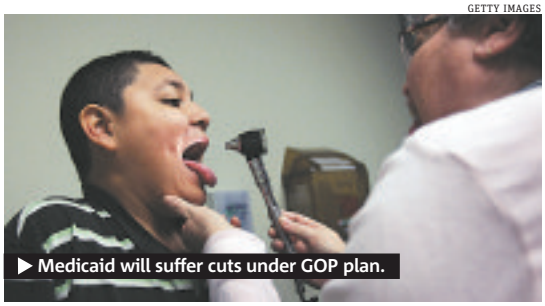
House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's plan — his latest version of the "Path to Prosperity" measure that has been rejected by Democrats previously — likely will be approved this month by the GOP-controlled House. The budget "ends cronyism; eliminates waste, fraud and abuse; and returns the federal government to its proper sphere of activity," Ryan said.

The blueprint would give Republicans the bragging rights of crafting a balanced budget, even if it is based on pie-in-the-sky assumptions, such as the repeal of Obama's 2010 health-care overhaul.

Democrats will argue that the Ryan budget would undercut economic growth and that their alternative will more effectively create jobs.

Another slab, totaling $931 billion over 10 years, would come from counting savings from ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is money that critics argue would not have been spent anyway, and from changing accounting methods for the cost of domestic emergencies, such as hurricane rebuilding. **REUTERS**

GETTY IMAGES



▶ Medicaid will suffer cuts under GOP plan.

Contrast to Democrats

With its cuts to social programs including Medicaid, which provides health care for the poor and some people with disabilities, the measure will stand in stark contrast to a competing 2014 budget outline that Democrats will unveil.

Democrats make plans

Democrats will unveil a budget blueprint that will attempt to slice federal deficits by $1.85 trillion over 10 years through an equal mix of spending cuts and tax increases on the rich.

- The fiscal plan is the Democrats' answer to a Republican budget set forth in the House of Representatives that claims to reach balance in 10 years through deep cuts to domestic programs and without any tax increases beyond those approved on Jan. 1.
- The plan aims to speed jobs growth, calling for $100 billion in new spending on crumbling roads and bridges and worker training.
- It would also fully replace automatic spending cuts with savings elsewhere, the source said, preventing the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

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Military Veterans, ask about Operation Tuition Freedom.

Cardinals start search for new pope amid troubles in the church

ANDREAS SOLARO,ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

▶ U.S. representatives hold placards asking for an American pope as they wait for the results from the conclave.

Thick black smoke billowed into the night sky from the Sistine Chapel's chimney yesterday, signaling an inconclusive first vote in the conclave to elect a new pope at a time of strife and scandal for the Roman Catholic Church.

Thousands of faithful huddled in St. Peter's Square to watch the smoke pour out of the narrow flue in the rain-laden gloom following a day rich in ritual and pageantry.

After praying for divine guidance, the red-hatted cardinals took a solemn vow, in Latin, never to divulge any details of their deliberations.

They then secluded themselves behind the chapel's heavy wooden doors.

No conclave in the modern era has chosen a pope on its first day, and some cardinals speculated this week that it might take four or five days to pick the man to replace Pope Benedict, who unexpectedly abdicated last month.

The so-called "Princes of the Church" spent the night in a Vatican hotel before returning to the frescoed Sistine Chapel today to continue their votes, with two rounds set for the morning and two for the afternoon.

In the meantime, their only communication with the outside world will be smoke from the Chapel chimney — black when voting sessions end with no result and white when a pontiff is elected.

Whoever becomes the 266th pontiff in the Church's 2,000-year history will face an array of problems, including sex-abuse scandals, infighting within the bureaucracy and the spread of secularism. **REUTERS**

Do Androids dream of toppling iPads?

Shipments of Apple Inc.'s iPads will fall behind the growing variety of tablets running Google Inc.'s Android platform for the first time this year IDC said. iPad shipments are expected to account for 46 percent of the market in 2013, IDC said. Devices running Android are expected to grow their market share to 49 percent. **REUTERS**

$7M

Google Inc. will pay $7 million to 38 states and the District of Columbia to settle an investigation into an incident in which its Street View mapping cars collected passwords and other personal data from home wireless networks between 2008 and 2010. **REUTERS**

24

THE DAY'S NEWS AT A GLANCE

"This bill is about three simple things: It's about love, it's about family and it's about equality under the law."

COLORADO HOUSE SPEAKER MARK FERRANDINO, A GAY DEMOCRAT AND A SPONSOR OF A PASSED BILL ALLOWING SAME-SEX CIVIL UNIONS IN THE STATE. THE MEASURE, WHICH PASSED BY A 39-26 VOTE IN THE STATE HOUSE, WOULD PROVIDE BENEFITS, PROTECTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO GAY COUPLES.

Venezuela to probe cancer 'poisoning' accusation

Venezuela will set up a formal inquiry into suspicions that the late President Hugo Chavez's cancer was the result of poisoning by his enemies abroad. The accusation has been derided by critics of the government, who view it as a typical Chavez-style conspiracy theory intended to feed fears of "imperialist" threats to the socialist system. Still, acting President Nicolas Maduro vowed to push through a serious investigation into the claim. "We will seek the truth," Maduro told Telesur. "We have the intuition that our commander Chavez was poisoned by dark forces that wanted him out of the way." **REUTERS**

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Ten years since Iraq invasion

▶ A tank from the United States Marine Task Force Tarawa sets up position in front of a painting of Saddam Hussein in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah in March 2003.

GETTY IMAGES

"The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. We will meet that threat now," President George W. Bush said in a somber televised address on March 19, 2003.

Alejandro Villatoro, then a 20-year-old from Chicago, was one of those soldiers charged with meeting that threat. "I went in ready to kill for the sake of freedom," he said. "But the problems started almost right away. And when we invaded, we started hearing reports that there were no WMDs and no al Qaeda link."

But by the time Bush landed on an aircraft carrier in front of a banner announcing "Mission Accomplished," it was clear that the Iraq War had been launched on shaky grounds. "The initial goal, regime, change, was quickly and comprehensively achieved," notes Michael Codner, director of the Military Sciences Department at a London military think tank. "The problem was the occupation phase, which is very different from expelling Iraq from Kuwait. The Bush administration's assumption that Iraqis were eager to get rid of Saddam Hussein and would welcome the occupation was bizarre."

4,500
The war took the lives of almost 4,500 U.S. soldiers.

Since then, the Iraq War has joined Vietnam as the most controversial in U.S. history. No WMDs have been found, but the war has taken the lives of almost 4,500 U.S. soldiers, some 350 soldiers from other coalition countries and around 110,000 Iraqis. Then there's the financial cost to U.S. taxpayers: $1 trillion and counting.

Still, by 2011 a majority of Americans said the U.S. had "mostly succeeded" in reaching its goals in Iraq.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Helicopter crash in southern Afghanistan kills five Americans

Five U.S. military personnel were killed in a helicopter crash in southern Afghanistan, the Pentagon said yesterday, although there were no immediate details about the cause of the crash.

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan said the crash occurred on Monday. It happened on the same day that two U.S. troops and five Afghan police and soldiers were killed by a person in an Afghan military uniform in the restive east of the country.

"The cause of the crash is under investigation; however, initial reporting indicates there was no enemy activity in the area at the time of the incident," ISAF said in a statement.

The Pentagon said all five killed in the crash were Americans. REUTERS

Recent copter crashes

Helicopter crashes are not uncommon in Afghanistan, and the Taliban and others often claim to have shot them down.

Last August, 11 people, including seven U.S. soldiers, were killed when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed in southern Afghanistan.

The worst such incident was in August 2011, when the Taliban shot down a CH-47 Chinook transport helicopter, killing all 38 people on board, including 25 U.S. special operations troops.

THE WORD

Meredith Engel's take on the world of gossip @meredithatmetro meredith.engel@metro.us

– Dorothy Robinson will return on March 20.

Butler not good with names

I'm not sure why I'm so fascinated by the hookup between **Gerard Butler** and **Brandi Glanville**. Maybe it's because she's so low on the celebrity totem pole, and he's a bit higher. Or maybe it's because he just told **Howard Stern** that he had "wild" sex with the reality star, then forgot her name when a paparazzo approached him about the tryst. Always a gent, Butler explained himself to Stern. "I said: 'Who's Brandi Glanville?' Because, 1. I didn't know her last name; and 2. I didn't know she was going to f—king tell people about it!"

How funny: Butler has no trouble forgetting the women he's slept with, and we have no trouble forgetting his movies.

Butler

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Want to get in on the action, ironically or not? Lil Jon brings his moves to NYC on April 11.

SETH BROWARNIK/WORLDREDEYE.COM

Lil Jon wants to rock your next Zumba class

When **Lil Jon** told us he was gonna move "till the sweat drops down" to a specific place near his own "lil jon," as it were, we had no idea he was talking about getting low in a Zumba class. But apparently the rapper is a big fan of the fitness craze (or just really short on cash) and has signed on to DJ Zumba classes across the country as part of a new Zumba Nightclub Series. Lil Jon will spin on the turntables while celebrity instructor Gina Grant leads a workout. Oh, and don't hit the radio for his new single, "Work" — it was created just for Zumba and will be the theme song for the nightclub series tour, complete with dance moves.

As Metro's resident fitness test dummy, I admit this class does sound tantalizing. But I will only partake under the following conditions: 1. I get to rehydrate with crunk juice instead of water; 2. all participants get to shout "OH-KAY!" and "YAY-UH!" whenever they please.

Talking points

Gomez ready to grow up

As her new movie "Spring Breakers" suggests, former "Witches of Waverly Place" star **Selena Gomez** is eager to cut ties with her Disney past. "Disney is a machine, and I'm grateful for it, but I feel like being part of that environment made me crave the reaction from

▶ Gomez

other projects even more," Gomez tells The New York Times. "Creatively, this is where I wanted to go." The racy, violent film features Gomez and former "High School Musical" star **Vanessa Hudgens** as coeds who rob a diner to fund a wild week in Florida.

If Wilde has ugly days, we're all screwed

Olivia Wilde says fiance **Jason Sudeikis** is "the great love of my life," but when she first started falling for him she worried the "Saturday Night Live" star's feelings wouldn't be mutual. "I thought, 'He won't be interested in me; I'm not a contender,'" she tells Marie Claire. "He was so cool, so funny — I was such a fan of his and had always fancied his speed and his intelligence. He's a brilliant actor with a brain like lightning. I thought, 'I'm not beautiful enough or his type.'"

Stop getting those One Direction tattoos already

The boys in **One Direction** clearly love tattoos, considering how many they've added to their bodies in the past year — but apparently they're learning to draw the line. Their reps deleted a post to the boy band's Twitter account asking fans to submit photos of their own ink to win tickets to see the band's upcoming 3-D movie. "This tweet was posted in error and has now been removed," a rep tells the BBC. "One Direction does not want to encourage any of their fans to get 1D tattoos."

The feed ...

▶ Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

Today, Michael Caine is celebrating, Ricky Martin is worried, Bill Maher is excited about getting a new pope and Kelly Clarkson can't believe what her body can't handle.

@themichaelcaine
Thank You for your kind Birthday messages. Will blow the candles off

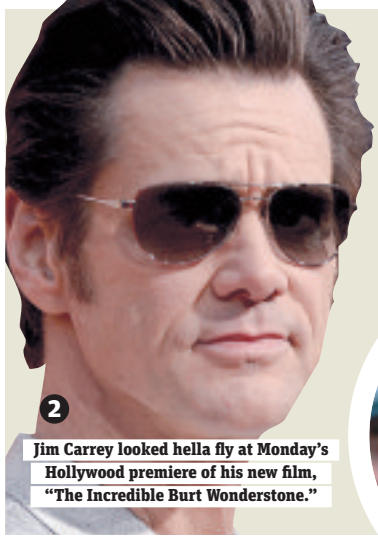
@ricky_martin
Of all the "Trending News" out there, the one that I really care and I'm concerned about is North Korea.

@billmaher
Papal conclave has begun! So exciting, like the Oscars all over again- we all want to know: Who will win, and who's dress will he be wearing?

@kelly_clarkson
I just found out I'm allergic to Golden Rod .....c'mon that has to be fake haha. It's sounds like an adult movie, not a weed!

Clarkson

myentertainment



Jim Carrey looked hella fly at Monday's Hollywood premiere of his new film, "The Incredible Burt Wonderstone."

The British are coming (to fight drugs)

1: Russell Brand and **Mitch Winehouse** launched the Amy Winehouse Foundation Drugs Resilience program in U.K. schools yesterday in London.

3: Looks like **Zara Phillips'** horse didn't do very well on day one of the Cheltenham Festival at Cheltenham Racecourse yesterday in England.

4: Director **Joseph Gordon-Levitt** (dang, it feels good to type that) introduced his film "Don Jon's Addiction" during SXSW in Austin, Texas, on Monday.

5: Journey lead singer **Arnel Pineda** gave some love to the camera onstage in Osaka, Japan, yesterday.

6: "Girls" star **Allison Williams**, daughter of **Brian**, had a laugh at the Elvis Duran and the Morning Show studios yesterday in NYC.

1: EAMONN MCCORMACK/GETTY IMAGES
2: KEVIN WINTER/GETTY
3: DANNY MARTINDALE/GETTY
4: MICHAEL BUCKNER/GETTY
5: JUN SATO/WIREIMAGE
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TV watch list

MONTY BRINTON/CBS

▶ The cast of "Survivor" is all smiles here, but not for long.

'Survivor'

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8 p.m., CBS

'Haunted Collector'

REALITY. Paranormal investigators weigh in on one of humanity's oldest questions: Is my stuff haunted?
9 p.m., Syfy

'Kimora: House of Fab'

REALITY. Get the inside scoop on the too-everything Kimora Lee Simmons, who helms the online fashion service House of Fab.
9 p.m., Style

'Not My Mama's Meals'

REALITY. Chef Bobby Deen concocts healthier versions of his famous mother's decadent dishes.
9 p.m., Cooking

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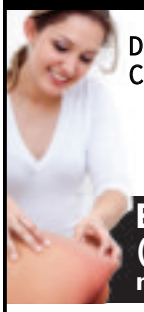

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Hanging up his Morning Jacket for a solo outfit

With three shows at SXSW this week, Jim James talks about his new solo project and past visits to the Austin music conference

SXSW

NOLAN GAWRON
TWITTER: @METROUSMUSIC

With My Morning Jacket taking a brief break, the prolific Jim James is trying something different with his recent solo album. "Regions of Light and Sound of God," released last month, seems and sounds as though divine intervention has led the songwriter to new sonic soil.

Playing almost all of the instruments on the record, this isn't your traditional stripped-down solo journey, but instead an epic musical onslaught that sounds as though a dozen people contributed to the final product.

Taking his new tunes on the road, James has built a quartet comprised of fellow Louisvillians to help rebuild the audio architecture of the solo record in a live setting. After catching his first few shows in NYC last month, my skepticism quickly turned to satisfaction as the new band delivered some magical moments that not only gave life to the album, but took the

'True destiny' on the line

Since their SXSW debut, My Morning Jacket has only played the festival one other time — in 2008. They went from being unknown hopefuls in 2002, to being one of the SXSW's main attractions six years later while previewing their album, "Evil Urges." So what is Jim looking forward to seeing this year? "My true destiny," he says.

— Jim James plays three shows at SXSW and participates in a panel discussion and a non-SXSW-affiliated benefit show at Willie Nelson's Ranch.

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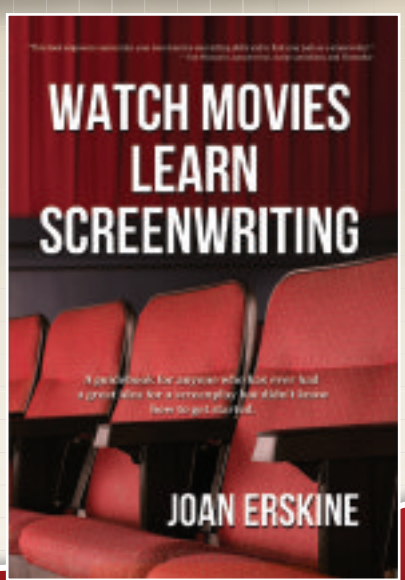

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▶ Jim James is no longer just the dude with the guitar who happens to be in front of the microphone, he's now a solo singer! Seek out his performance on "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon," pictured here.

songs to another level.

Focusing primarily on electronics, James' band fills the instrumental backdrop while he mans the mic, taking on the role of the traditional frontman, and occasionally picking up random and often unlikely instruments.

While My Morning Jacket are no strangers to SXSW, James makes his first appearance at the festival this week as a solo act. MMJ's first trip to Austin came early in their career and James is quick to note the benefits of playing the festival then.

"The year was 1914," James says in jest. "Alongside other explorers like us who had heard about the legend of gold in them rolling hills and mountain ranges of downtown Austin, we rolled into town just before dawn on March 13 of that year and took up shop at the Pecan Street Ale House … or was it Urban Outfitters?"

All jokes aside, the venues and day of the month are real, but the year was 2002 and SXSW became one of the band's first shows outside of Europe and Kentucky.

"It's all strange and wonderful," says James. "I mean, we've worked our asses to the bone over the years and it feels good when you chase a dream and see some progress. … It's very exciting and we are very grateful to the universe to have been allowed to make some progress on our dreams."

—Follow ***Nolan Gawron*** *on Twitter: @metrousmusic. Check www.metro.us for his updates on the best of SXSW.*

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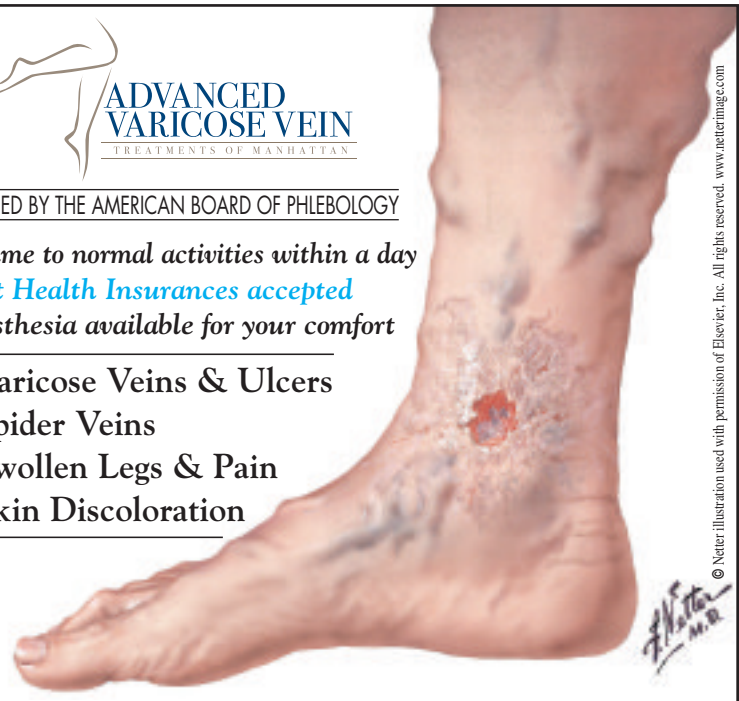

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Marc Jacobs: Sex

Diet Coke wraps its signature bottles in the designer's fashion to mark 30th anniversary ◗ The brand's new creative director talks sex, Kate Moss and why he won't compete with Tom Ford

Next month you'll turn 50. What do you have planned for your midlife crisis?
My midlife crisis has been going on for 20 years. I don't see it as a crisis at all. I think it's quite an adventure, not a crisis, for me. I'm not going to buy a Corvette or anything like that — I guess that's someone else's midlife crisis.

You've said you don't have any big party plans, but you seem to enjoy wearing some pretty outrageous outfits, like that pink polo shirt dress. Do you enjoy getting dressed up?
I do enjoy it. I love attention. I'm very honest about it. There were years when I just didn't want to do press, and I didn't really care about my appearance; I sort of shied away from things like that. But in order to enjoy [press events], I have to be me and sometimes that means wearing a pink dress, a lace dress or a kilt. Also, I feel like I need to relate to that joy and that ritual of going shopping and finding something to wear and then wearing it. I think being connected to that makes me a better designer: It's sort of like practicing what you preach. I wouldn't really be doing my job if I didn't do that.

Jacobs' bottle collection

What's your relationship with Kate Moss like?
Kate Moss? She just texted me. We've been on holiday together. We were in Ibiza a few years ago with her daughter [Lila Grace], [photographers] Mert [Alas] and Marcus [Piggott] and some friends of mine. I've spent a great deal of time with Kate over the years; we genuinely like each other — we just click.

She regularly closes your show. Do you ask her, or vice-versa?
It works both ways. She's expressed interest and of course, I've expressed interest in wanting her in a show. Over the past few years, it's kind of like the Vuitton show is the only show she'll do. It's kind of just become this thing.

Your last few Louis Vuitton shows contained sexual undertones. How does sex influence your work?
Sex is a big part of my life. It's a very big part of most people's lives, whether they want to admit it or not. I don't know, sometimes when collections feel more personal there's more of an undercurrent of things that are of an emotional nature. When I dream, there's this darkness, this melancholy side, there's this sexual tension and then there's this kind of identity thing that goes on: an element of role-play and honesty. In the collec-

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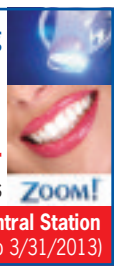

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▶ Apparently, Diet Coke does a body good.

STEPHANE SEDNAOUI

tions that I feel most proud of, there are personal feelings and emotions that make it human.

Speaking of sex, you're in great shape and so is Tom Ford. Who's the bigger stud and why?

I don't know. I don't compete with Tom Ford. Tom's a friend of mine and I think Tom's terrific. He's a great-looking guy and all of that, but I certainly don't set out to compete with Tom. [Laughs] I wouldn't compare anything of mine to anything of his.

Cigarettes, coffee and Diet Coke — would that you say you've got an addictive personality?

Let's not put cigarettes in the same category as Diet Coke. Smoking is my bad habit, I'd say. It's my biggest vice and bad habit; I don't recommend it.

Richard Peckett
METRO WORLD NEWS

On his work

- **How does the inspiration differ between your Marc Jacobs and Louis Vuitton lines?**
  The N.Y. collection is very personal to my life growing up in New York. My collection in Paris is a bit more of a fantasy life: that of being a French designer and working with the ateliers of Paris — it feels like I'm looking in on a different world.
- **Are there too many designer collaborations?**
  No, no. If nobody had any interest in designers doing bottles, then Diet Coke wouldn't ask designers to do it. It's about supply and demand.
- **Do you think fashion houses are creating too many collections?**
  It is too much, but I don't actively participate in all of it to the same degree. I know when I'm most needed and that's when I rise to the occasion, and I don't think any one person does do that much. They might say that they do, but they don't.

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SPRING ARTS PREVIEW
March 15th
Metro's seasonal special section featuring dance, performing arts, music and more!

MLB PREVIEW
March 29th
Metro takes a closer look at the coming season of America's pastime.

EARTH DAY ISSUE
April 19th
Climate change, endangered species, recycling – a progress report on planet Earth.

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What we're into

Organic Avenue chia juices

Regular Metro readers know that we've got a soft spot in our hearts for chia, the magical seeds that add fiber and omega-3s (without any weird taste) to our diet. Now we're psyched to see our favorite seed take up residence in two new juices from haute health brand Organic Avenue. The Hibiscus Chia Glow is reminiscent of an iced tea and gives you a nutritional boost thanks to the vitamin C and antioxidants in hibiscus powder. The Matcha Chia Glow is kind of like a Thai iced tea (if you've never had one, you're missing out) and contains chlorophyll (yes, the green stuff — don't freak), pumpkin seeds, vanilla bean powder, cardamom and Himalayan salt.

$7 per 14-ounce bottle, Organic Avenue stores across the city

Activate Water

The founder of this West Coast brand discovered that vitamins aren't as potent when dissolved in water, so he looked for a way to keep the liquid and supplements separate until go-time. Enter Activate: It contains zero calories and is sweetened with Stevia. **$2 per bottle, grocery stores**

5 Ways to avoid

March is dedicated to your lower bowel ◗ How to reduce your risk of developing cancer ◗ Genetics aren't everything ◗ Colonoscopies save lives

▶ If you're turning 50 this year, schedule a colonoscopy. For more information, visit www.stopcoloncancernow.com.

DIGITAL VISION

We carry around about 20-25 feet of intestine, and yet, until something goes wrong, we are oblivious to it. Therein lies the colon, which removes our body's waste. March has been designated National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, which aims to draw attention to this crucial part of the body's digestive system. Of the approximately 150,000 cases of colorectal cancer diagnosed in the U.S. annually, about 50,000 are fatal, according to the American Cancer Society. We asked Dr. Giancarlo Mercogliano, the chief of gastroenterology for Philly's Main Line Health System, for his tips on how to avoid those statistics by living a healthier life.

Maintain a healthy weight: "Being overweight is linked to colon cancer," Dr. Mercogliano says. "We are not sure of a direct link or whether that's because an overweight person has an unhealthy diet. But keeping weight in check is important."

Eat less meat: "The Western high-fat, high-meat diet is linked with colon cancer. In Africa, where many people eat a mostly vegetarian diet, there is less incidence of colon cancer. In Asia, too, where less meat is eaten, there is less incidence."

Limit your alcohol intake: "Moderate drinking might

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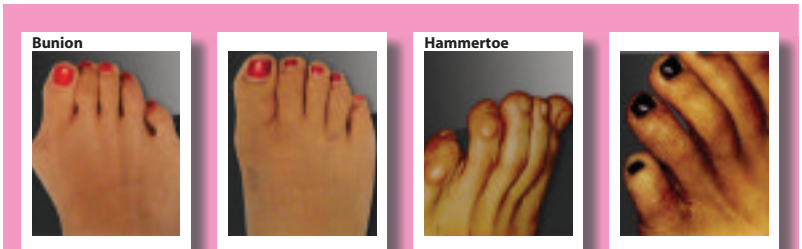

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colon cancer

Why you need a colonoscopy

"Colon cancer is the third leading cancer killer in both men and women," says Dr. David Robbins, a gastroenterologist at the Manhattan Endoscopy Center.

"It can be detected at a very early stage with a brief, painless test called a colonoscopy. Catching colon cancer early gives doctors an excellent shot at curing this often-preventable cancer."

Getting a colonoscopy is no big deal: There are alternatives to the typical liquid preparation, you're under anesthesia the whole time and patients can usually go home the same day.

The American Cancer Society recommends colonoscopy screening starting at age 50. But people at greater risk — such as those with a family history and African-Americans — should begin at age 45 or earlier.

"Most insurance covers colonoscopy screening at age 50," says Dr. Robbins. "If you are 65 or older, a colonoscopy is covered by Medicare."

be healthy — that's small, specified doses. While drinking a glass of red wine has been shown to be healthy, [more than that] is not."

Take your vitamins: "Vitamin D, calcium and folic acid have been shown quite clearly to prevent colon cancer. Aspirin too: The data is conflicting, but in one study, aspirin seemed to shrink polyps, which are thought to be precancerous."

Change your lifestyle: "Smoking promotes all cancers and that includes colon cancer. Also, exercise that benefits the whole body benefits the colon."

One young woman's cause

"When I was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer at 28, I didn't react 'normally' — I wasn't mad, sad or scared," says Gloria Borges, founder of The Wunder Project to fund colon cancer research. "Instead, I made it a challenge — and despite the odds, I was ready to beat cancer. I started a blog detailing my cancer-killing adventures, and with support I founded a colon cancer nonprofit. My focus now is finding the cure through The Wunder Project (www.thewunderproject.org), a methodical and cutting-edge research initiative led by myself and my world-renowned oncologist. It will start with raising $250 million and will end with the cure for colon cancer. Now at 31, I'm on my 45th round of chemo and living with this disease that kills 50,000 of my fellow fighters each year. The Wunder Project's goals are ambitious, but I am ready to lead and find the cure for us all."

Linda Clarke
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36 Win every game
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39 Purple flower
41 Ant
43 Tempo
44 Sniffed at
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49 High regard
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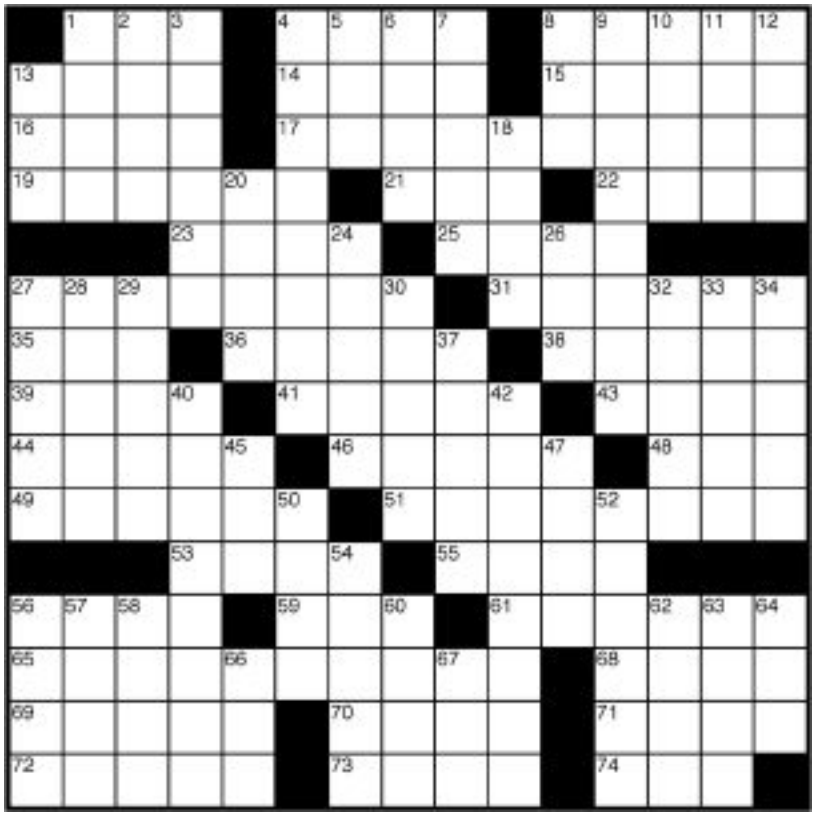
53 Erelong
55 B'way postings of yore
56 — Wooley's "The Purple People Eater"
59 PC key
61 Joke response (3 wds.)
65 Word lovers
68 Pakistani's tongue
69 Secret romance
70 Gave temporarily
71 Numskull
72 Heroic tale
73 Chop —
74 Tribute in verse



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34 Cards above deuces
37 Throws rocks
40 Attend to (2 wds.)
42 Full of gift shops
45 Hibernate
47 Urban woe
50 Gauzy-winged insect
52 False
54 Hardware buy
56 Smelting waste
57 Back from work
58 Id companions
60 Gourmet cheese
62 Walked heavily
63 Not working
64 Egyptian boy-king
66 Opposite of "post"
67 Hydrocarbon suffix

Horoscope

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** You are presently in a positive cycle in terms of your financial affairs. You might even acquire something that was long overdue.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** One of the best ways to get your co-workers' cooperation is to make sure that what's good for you can be great for them as well. It's one of the keys to success.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** Rather than vying for center stage, keep a low profile, especially if you've been given a key role to play. It's the best way to get the acknowledgment that you crave.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** If you want some interesting things to occur in your social life, you can't wait for the right people to come to you. Seek them out yourself and, in a nice way, make your presence felt.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** One of the best ways to deal with a competitive situation is to take more positive action than your adversaries do. Keep an optimistic, proactive frame of mind, and you'll come out ahead.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** Examine all new endeavors not merely for what they can do for you immediately, but how they can enhance your future. When you look ahead, make sure all the pieces fit together.

♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** Sometimes we find ourselves in the excellent position of being able to reap a harvest from seeds we haven't sown. This might be your scenario today, so be alert for such an opportunity.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** Snap judgments you arrive at might not be as perceptive as those of your mate's. Listen to his or her input, which could provide you with some alternatives that you haven't considered.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** The amount of zeal you display while working on a job is likely to set the tone that others will follow. If you want everything to unobtrusively buzz along, maintain an accelerated pace.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** You are likely to have more fun and feel more comfortable in a small gathering than in a large group. Try to stay within your comfort zone

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** If your primary goal is to amply provide for those you love, you'll make sure that this objective is met, no matter what the day may throw at you.

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** You should pay attention to intuition that tells you the proper course of action to take. Any afterthoughts will be less accurate, and land you on the rocks.

BERNICE BEDE OSOL

Solution to yesterday's crossword

Letters

Business not the only thing worth investing in

On March 27, our Congress has to pass a funding bill for the remainder of 2013. The House has just passed a bill that would keep the sequester in place, and without any changes from the Senate, this permanent sequester will have severe consequences for the National Institutes of Health.

While some argue that the sequester is not really a cut, the NIH will actually experience a 5.1 percent budget cut ($1.6 billion) as the NIH budgets have been flat over the past five years. As a concerned biomedical science graduate student, a NIH reduction will make it more difficult in my research on how to better activate killer T cells and their use in fighting cancer. Additionally, a failure to continue to invest in the NIH will hinder the development of new disease treatments and also negatively impact job development. Both Eric Cantor and Nancy Pelosi see the value in science funding and I urge Congress to find a way to blunt the impact of the sequester on the NIH.

SHAUN O'BRIEN, VIA E-MAIL

Pet sellers have gone to the dogs

Few people know that 98 percent to 100 percent of all pet store puppies come from inhumane, often criminally abusive puppy mills. The USDA licenses puppy mills and can barely keep up with annual inspections.

It also lacks the authority to shut down even the worst of them. Violations are rampant, and dogs that no longer churn out litters are killed or sold at auctions. Need proof? USDA inspection reports are online or simply Google puppy mills. Online-only sellers are completely unregulated — and it shows.

KRISTIE VANN, VIA E-MAIL

Wishing for a quick and decisive trial

So Osama's son-in-law Sulaiman Abu Ghaith is to be tried in New York on terror charges, plus conspiring to wreak havoc on New York City. Please, prosecutors, don't screw this up! At the very least, just try him and fry him!

HERB STARK, VIA E-MAIL

SUDOKU: HARD

		1			7	3		
				1	2			8
2				3		5	7	
			1				9	3
7			3		5			6
4	6				9			
	4	6		5				9
3			8	9				
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NFL GOES FISHIN'

Free agency gets under way around league ◗ First day is mostly quiet among New York teams ◗ Giants lose Bennett, bring back Ross ◗ Jets release veteran

Free agency began with a whimper in New York. Though, for the Jets at least, it didn't begin with a major loss.

The Giants weren't so lucky.

Tight end Martellus Bennett took full advatange of free agency — as he said he would — by bailing on the Giants to sign with the Bears just hours after the signing period began at 4 p.m.

Bennett apparently had eyes for Chicago even before the free-agency period, tweeting, "just know that's where I wanna be" at 4:06 p.m. Bennett is friends with Bears receiver Brandon Marshall.

Bennett had career highs of 55 receptions and five touchdowns in 2012.

The Giants will now have to look for a starting tight end for the third straight season, after losing Kevin Boss and Jake Ballard the past two years.

Mark Osborne
mark.osborne@metro.us

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Bennett was an under-the-radar signing last offseason, but the Giants couldn't hold onto him in 2013.

Giants bring back CB Ross

The Giants are getting the band back together.

New York decided to bring back corners Terrell Thomas and Corey Webster earlier this offseason and are now bringing back free agent Aaron Ross.

Ross was drafted by the team and was a member of the Giants from 2007 to 2011. He played with the Jaguars last season.

Ross played an integral role on both Super Bowl title teams but increasingly heard criticism in 2011. He signed a one-year deal to return. METRO/MO

Jets rework Holmes deal; cut Pouha

The Jets said goodbye to a Rex Ryan favorite while managing to avoid jettisoning another.

Santonio Holmes agreed to restructure his current deal in order to give the Jets more cap space. The wide receiver, who some feared wouldn't be amenable to a new deal due to his checkered past, was to be the highest-paid player on the team. Holmes, who is recovering from a Lisfranc injury in his left foot, was scheduled to make $11 million next season, a huge chunk for a team up against the salary cap and in need of new blood. The details of the new deal were not released.

Sione Pouha, meanwhile, was a casualty of the Jets' tight cap.

The 34-year-old defensive tackle was due to make about $5 million in guaranteed money if he remained on the roster tomorrow.

Pouha dealt with injuries much of last season. He played in 12 games, while Muhammad Wilkerson and Kenrick Ellis impressed on the line.

A league source said the Jets would like to bring back Pouha if he is willing to sign for less money. METRO/MO

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Pouha

29 Pouha played on just 29 percent of defensive snaps for the Jets last season.

NFL in brief

Gonzalez will return to Atlanta

FALCONS. Hold up on the retirement talk for one more year.

Falcons tight end — and "95 percent" retired NFL great — Tony Gonzalez decided to return to Atlanta today.

Gonzalez had said all 2012 he planned to retire, though he left the door open 5 percent to return after the Falcons were eliminated in the NFC title game.

He wrote on Twitter that the opportunity to return was "too good to pass up."

Gonzalez is second all-time in receptions and sixth in touchdown catches. METRO

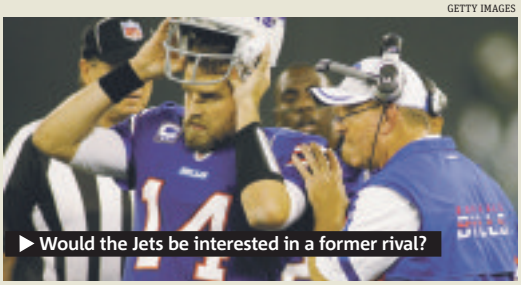
Buffalo releases QB Fitzpatrick

BILLS. Buffalo quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick's six-year, $59 million deal lasted all of two seasons.

Fitzpatrick was due a $3 million bonus this month if he was kept on the roster. Instead, the Bills bid goodbye to their starter of the past four seasons.

Fitzpatrick, 30, has a career QB rating of 76.8 and has thrown 92 TDs and 81 interceptions. METRO

GETTY IMAGES



▶ Would the Jets be interested in a former rival?

Asomugha era ends as bust for Philadelphia

EAGLES. The biggest signing of the 2011 free-agency period is officially a bust.

Eagles cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha was released yesterday after two ineffective seasons.

The former Pro Bowler signed a blockbuster five-year, $60 million deal with Philadelphia at a time when he was arguably the top cornerback in the league. METRO

In the news

Sampson wins rookie honor

JaKarr Sampson took Big East Rookie of the Year honors yesterday, the second straight St. John's player to win the award.

Sampson averaged 14.9 points and 6.6 rebounds per game this year. He wins the award one year after Moe Harkless, who left for the NBA and was selected No. 16 by the Sixers.

Sampson was a unanimous selection to the Big East All-Rookie team and took Rookie of the Week honors seven times.

St. John's (16-14) begins their quest for the Big East tourney title tonight at 7 p.m. on ESPN2 against Villanova.

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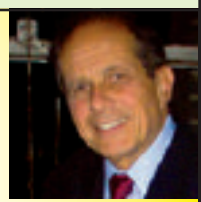

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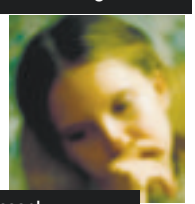

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▶ In the market to buy? Expect long lines at open houses as New Yorkers are faced with an inventory shortage.

EYECANDY IMAGES

When bidding gets 'absolutely insane'

Brokers say bidding wars are now taking place in the majority of deals they see as the market heats up amid tight inventory

Bidding wars have been prevalent for some time. But lately, brokers say, multiple bids and "best and final" negotiations — in which all of the potential buyers simultaneously submit their final offer and the seller chooses between them — now take place in the majority of deals.

Howard Margolis, an executive vice president at Douglas Elliman, says the number of bidding wars he's witnessed is "absolutely insane." In one instance, three parties made offers on an apartment during a single open house, he says.

Other brokers share similar stories.

Bill Bone, a broker at Bond New York, says a buyer recently lost out on a condo in Williamsburg after "we had to compete with 45 other offers."

Jonathan Miller, CEO of the appraisal firm Miller Samuel, says the uptick in bidding wars is "the byproduct of low inventory." As we reported, the number of available Manhattan listings in the fourth quarter of 2012 dropped 34.2 percent to 4,749 from 7,221 in the same quarter of 2011, according to a Douglas Elliman market report.

Often, bidding wars result in buyers paying more than the asking price.

But it's not clear that bidding wars alone increase home values, since some buyers react to bidding wars by looking for lower-priced homes.

"I guide my buyers to look at prices below their target, knowing full well that the final selling price will likely come up," Bone says.

And it's not always the highest bid that wins. With lending standards still tight, many sellers prefer to take all-cash offers.

"In many cases, the cash deal even trumps the higher bidder," says Jessica Cohen, an Elliman broker.

David Kazemi, a broker at Bond, says some of his clients have been "utterly frustrated" by the competitive atmosphere. In fact, one client "removed himself from the market" after seeing a rotation of 30 people in 15 minutes at an open house, Kazemi says.

HAYLEY KAPLAN

On the market

One of Bone's buyers recently beat out seven other bidders for a newly converted condo at 206 Montrose Ave. in Williamsburg. Although Bone declines to specify exactly how much the buyer paid for the unit, he says the price was around 10 percent above the $400,000 asking price.

To close the deal

Agents have had to develop new strategies to aid disheartened clients. "Brokers are making sure that customers are well aware of the fact that they have to act fast, ask fewer questions and place a bid close to [the] asking price if they want to have a chance at getting what might now be a rare apartment," says Janice Silver, an executive vice president at Bellmarc Realty.

But that's easier for experienced brokers than for rookie agents, sources say. "Brokers who have been in the business a long time — those are the ones who are successful right now," Margolis says. "It's not [a business] for the faint of heart."

Quoted

"In this market, just when you think that you have the best possible deal on the table — not only related to price but also terms — somebody else comes to the table with a better offer. This can be dangerous during the negotiation process, as people get frustrated and [sometimes] even walk away."

JACKY TEPLITZKY, A MANAGING DIRECTOR AT ELLIMAN

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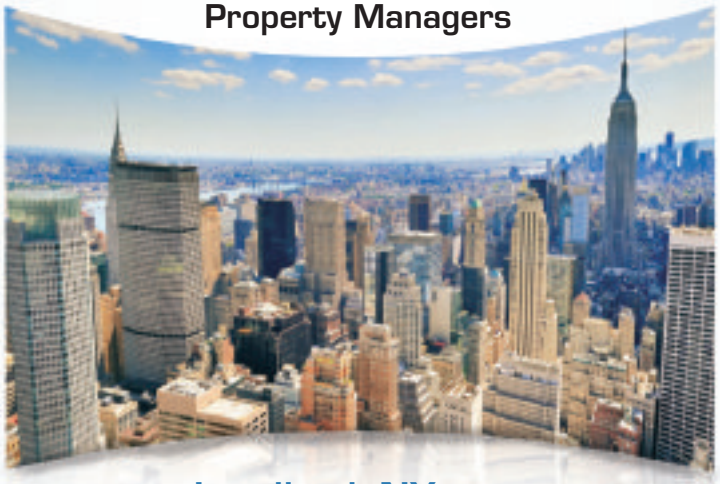

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Satiating your spring fever

It's time to get a head start on the growing season Or plant indoors for year-round greenery Start small and build up

PHOTODISC

It's not too early to start prepping your spring garden.

It's a little too early to let spring fever take you over entirely. There is still a possibility of frost, after all. But that doesn't mean we don't get eager when thinking ahead to April showers and May flowers. We checked in with Patricia Schrieber, who has been with the nonprofit Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for more than 30 years, for the best ways to prep for a colorful growing season.

For those that can't wait

If you're just dying to start digging in the dirt, Schrieber suggests sticking with something sturdy that can withstand the cold weather and the possibility of frost. "A hearty perennial or a shrub would be fine to plant now," she says. Check with your local nursery to see which perennials are the toughest, most weather-resistant options for your area.

Planting in the great indoors

Be prepared before you begin your hunt for indoor plants. "Know which windows get the most light in your house or apartment, then you can get the right plant for the right place," says Schrieber. "Usually, if a window gets at least five hours of sunlight, that's equal to 'full sunlight.'" Think of it this way: You wouldn't go couch shopping without measuring your living room first.

Start smart, not big

Don't get lured in by beautiful but fussy foliage. If you're a newbie on the plant front, stick with the greens that you can keep alive. "Try to match the plant to the condition, then you'll feel good," says Schrieber. "And be smart about what you're buying," she warns. "Start small, be successful, then take on more."

Branch out in your community

Not enough space inside or outside your home to grow the luscious garden you've been dreaming of? Not a problem. The solution to small space is a community garden. There you can grow and — as Schrieber suggests — share. "If you have too many seeds or more plants than room, share with people. Some gardeners are happy to do a seed swap," says Schrieber.

Julia West
letters@metro.us

Seeds or starter plants: Which is right for you?

Of course, starter plants are easier to work with and require less attention than seeds. But if you don't call yourself a novice, go the seed route. Just make sure you have an area indoors that is well lit and has good air circulation. If the circulation is minimal you could experience ceiling rot, which can be caused by the plants' moisture.

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COURTESY OF THE REAL DEAL

▶ A micro-unit model was on display at the Museum of the City of New York.

Macro economics meets micro units

After the proposal that Elisa Orlanski Ours worked on won the Bloomberg administration's contest to design the city's first micro-unit building, the Corcoran Sunshine executive started getting calls from developers. Five contacted Ours, who served as a creative and marketing consultant, asking questions about modular micro-unit development in NYC.

"New York is really ready for a new topology," said Ours.

The team that submitted the bid — nARCHITECTS, Monadnock Development LLC and the Actors Fund Housing Development Corp. — will create 55 units about at 370 square feet at 335 E. 27th St.

But many are now asking whether micro-units are financially viable for developers.

Indeed, the city not only provided the property for the low price of $500,000, but also waived a zoning regulation that required an apartment in a new building to be at least 400 square feet. The city will not provide additional subsidies for the roughly $15 million project, but those contributions were big financial sweeteners.

Still, private developers, including some of the contest's finalists, say tiny micro-units would financially pencil out. The only issue holding them back are the zoning restrictions.

They predict, however, that if 335 E. 27th St. commands rents on par with market-rate studio units, it will be a matter of time before the city lifts those zoning restrictions.

The upper limits of the project's market-rate rents have not yet been released, but the 40 percent that have been set aside as affordable housing will range from $914 to $1,873.

Matthew Blesso, president of Blesso Properties, says the city's high housing costs make developing micro-units appealing.

"There are a lot of people are willing to live in smaller spaces to save money," says Blesso, who is planning 250-square-foot units. **TOM ACITELLI**

Why go small

- Mayor Bloomberg noted that the growth rate for one- and two-person households "greatly exceeds that of households with three or more people." (There are about 1.8 million one- and two-person households in the city, but only about 1 million studio and one-bedroom apartments, according to city figures.)

Therealdeal.com is a daily blog and monthly magazine covering real estate in the New York metro area.

THE REAL DEAL

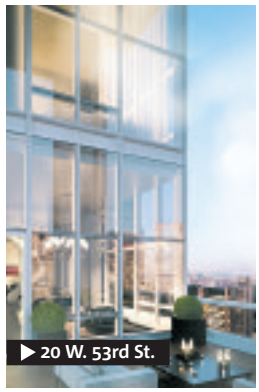
Market watch

Cheapest

The least expensive property listed this week is a studio at **1777 Madison Ave.** in East Harlem. This co-op unit, listed by the Stafford Realty Group for **$110,000,** offers buyers exposed brick walls and natural light.

Priciest

The most expensive property listed this week is a penthouse at the Baccarat Hotel and Residences at **20 W. 53rd St.** Listed by Corcoran, this two-floor unit is going for **$60,000,000** and includes five bedrooms, five-and-a-half baths, a terrace and wraparound views.



▶ 20 W. 53rd St.

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